Sri Vedanta Desika and His Message

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This Monograph is offered
with profound respects at the
Holy Feet of His Holiness
Srimad Paramahamsa Parivrajikacharya
Sri Sri Gopala Desika Maha Desikar
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of
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Sri Venkatanatha (1268 A.D. to 1369 A.D.) is one of the most brilliant and many-sided personalities we come across in the field of Indian Philosophy. He was otherwise known as 'Vedanta Desika', and was honoured with the titles of 'Sarvatantra Svatantra' and 'Kavi Tarkika Simha'. He was one of the very few prolific writers who were authors of more than a hundred works on different subjects of study and systems of philosophy. He was an all-round genius and his works display a very rare but happy fusion of poetry and philosophy.

Vedanta Desika was born at Thuppil near Conjeevaram in the year 1191 of the Salivahana Era of noble parents Sri Anantha Suri and Totaramba. It is believed that he was the very incarnation of the Divine-Bell of Lord Srinivasa. Desika acquired

proficiency in all the branches of knowledge within the very early age of twenty. His maternal uncle Sri Atreya Ramanuja was his preceptor, and Desika has paid his homage to this great teacher in his works. Even as a boy Desika was known for his spirit of enquiry, imagination, memory and fervent devotion. The great Varadacharya or Nadadurammal was struck with the unique genius of Desika, even as he was a boy, and blessed him with his hearty benediction,

प्रतिष्ठापितवेदान्तः, प्रतिक्षिप्तबहिर्मतः ।
भूयाः त्रैविद्यमान्यस्त्वं भूरिकल्याणभाजनम् ॥

which came out to be quite true.

Vedanta Desika led the life of a householder and proved that the life of a householder was not an obstacle for realization of spiritual emancipation. He dedicated his life to the service of God and the Godly Souls, and was like a 'Jeevanmukta' on account of his supreme detachment in worldly interests.

Desika lived the full span of a hundred years and utilised it wholly for realization and propagation of the Supreme Truth. He travelled far and wide visiting innumerable holy places and worshipping the Lord with his soul-stirring prayers. He practised and preached the truths of Visistadvaita to hosts of earnest seekers and strengthened their faith in the Supreme Lord. He defended his school against critics using their own method of dialectics and established his school on firm and solid foundations of Logic.

Vedanta Desika is one of the greatest poets of Sanskrit Literature and his works 'Yadavabhyudayam', 'Hamsa Sandesa' and 'Samkalpa Suryodayam' are everlasting monuments to his poetical genius. Poetry naturally came to him and he is a master of every variety of it from lyric to the epic. His style is profoundly suggestive and inimitable. The great scholar and poet Appayya Dixita has admired his divine poetry in unequivocal terms as follows :

इत्थं विचिन्त्यास्सर्वत्र भावास्सन्ति पदे पदे ।
कवितार्किकसिंहस्य, काव्येषु ललितेष्वपि ॥

'Even in the simple and soft compositions of the Lion of poets and logicians, there are poetic excellences to be reflected upon at every step in every word.'

Desika was not only a 'Lion among poets', but also he was a 'Lion among logicians'. He worked out the metaphysics of Visistadvaita Vedanta and presented it in the rigorous technical method adopted by the Nyaya-vaisheshika expositors. There was a felt need for the exposition of the metaphysics, logic and

epistemology of Visistadvaita in the Nyaya-vaisheshika method, and Desika fulfilled this need by writing out his works 'Nyaya-siddhanjanam', 'Nyaya-parishuddhi', 'Tattvamuktakalapa' and 'Sarvartha Siddhi', known for their technicality and logical thoroughness. The most famous 'Shatadushini' is his dialectical masterpiece, wherein he marshalls a thorough discussion of the fundamentals of Advaita in the technical jargon of Naveena Nyaya.

Desika is not a mere poet or a mere logician but also an ardent philosopher. He was principally a devotee of God and all his utterances have emanated from his intense devotion to the Lord. His poetry is devotional in character and highly philosophic. His intense devotion towards God forms the background of his acutest logical acumen, and his fertile poetic imagination. He lived a very pious and simple life of renunciation dedicated wholly to the service of the Lord. He never aspired for earthly wealth and shunned all praise and flattery. He considered his Lord alone as the Supreme Wealth bequeathed to him by his forefathers. There was a unique combination of Jnana, Bhakti and Vairagya in him. A few statements of his own are given hereunder and these reveal his firm convictions and aspirations:

देव सेवितुमेव निश्चिनुमहे योऽसौ दयालुः परा ।
धानामुष्टिमुचे कुचेलमुनये दत्तेस्म वित्तेशताम् ॥

(Vairagya Panchakam)

'We decide to serve the ever-compassionate Lord alone, who bestowed upon that Kuchela, the giver of a handful of fried rice, the lordship of wealth itself.'

नास्ति पित्रार्जितं किञ्चित्, न मया किञ्चिदार्जितम् ।
अस्ति मे हस्तिशैलाग्रे वस्तु पैतामहं धनम् ॥

'No paternal property have I inherited; nor was anything earned by me. But atop the Elephant Hill is the wealth of my grandfather quite secure.'

(Vairagya Panchakam)

यदञ्जनाभं निरपायमस्तु मे ।
धनञ्जयस्यन्दनभूषणं धनम् ॥

'May I gain that eternal wealth, effulgent with the lustre of the unguent and the adornment of the chariot of Arjuna.'

संसारावर्तवेगप्रशमनशुभदृग्देशिकप्रेक्षितोऽहम् ।
संसत्कोऽन्यैरुपायैरनुचितचरितेष्वद्य शान्ताभिसन्धिः ॥
निश्शंकस्तत्वदृष्टया निरवधिकदयं प्राप्य संरक्षकं त्वां ।
न्यस्य त्वत्पादपद्मे वरद निजभरं निर्भरो निर्भयोऽस्मि ॥

'Becoming the object of the kind glances of the preceptors of auspicious looks that destroy the forces of the whirlpools of Samsara, being abandoned by all other means of emancipation, having given up all interest in unworthy activities, being free from any doubts whatsoever due to the vision of the Highest Truth, having obtained Thee, the all-merciful redeemer, and having placed on thy lotus-feet the burden of my protection, I am, now, O Lord, relieved of all burdens and fears.'

(Nyasavimsathi)

निर्विष्टं यतिसार्वभौमवचसामावृत्तिभिर्यौवनं ।
निर्धूतेतरपारतन्त्र्यनिरया नीतास्सुखं वासराः ॥
अङ्गीकृत्य सतां प्रसत्तिमसतां गर्वोऽपि निर्वापितः ।
शेषायुष्यपि शेषिदम्पतिदयादीक्षामुदीक्षामहे ॥

'My youth was spent in repeated reflections of the words of the sovereign among saints (Ramanuja). My days were spent happily being rid of the hell-like subservience to others. The pleasure of the virtuous was gained, whereas the vanity of the vicious was dispelled. I look forward, even during the rest of my life to stand in the vow of the compassion of the Divine couple.' (Rahasyatrayasara)

त्वं चेत् प्रसीदसि तवास्मि समीपतश्चेत् ।
त्वय्यस्ति भक्तिरनघा करिशैलनाथ ॥
संसृज्यते यदि च दासजनस्तदीयः ।
संसार एष भगवन्नपवर्ग एव ॥

'O Lord of the Elephant Hill, this Samsara is surely spiritual emancipation, if Thou art pleased with me, if I am nearest to Thee, if I have pure devotion for Thee, and if I am in close contact with Thy devotees.'

(Varadaraja Panchashat)

The immediate disciples of Desika have given a marvellously realistic picture of their master. We can understand the personality of Desika and the austere life of dedication he lived here.'

यः ख्यातिलाभपूजासु, विमुखो वैष्णवे जने ।
क्रयणीयदशां प्राप्तः, तस्मै भव्याय मङ्गलम् ॥

'May all good be to that grand personality who was austerely averse to fame, gain or worship and who attained the stage of being freely disposed off by the holy Vaishnavas.'

(Nayanacharya)

संभावना यस्य हि कालकूटः ।
सभा भुजङ्गी कुणपं तरुण्यः ॥

स्यात् रौरवं राजगृहं स जीयात् ।
चिरं गुरुर्वेङ्कटनाथनामा ॥

'Honour was to him like Kalakuta poison. The assembly was like the female snake, bodies were like dead bodies, the Royal Palace was like the Raurava Hell. May that preceptor Venkatanatha prosper for ever.'

(Vedanta Desika Dinacharya)

अतस्करग्राह्यपवित्रपातैः ।
अनिन्द्रियोन्मादकरैर्हविर्भिः ॥
आराध्य देवं कमलासहायं ।
आराधयेतं विहितानुयागम् ॥

'I worship him, the Guru, who after worshipping the Lord, the consort of the Goddess Sri, with holy vessels (of coconut shells) that would never be touched by thieves and who would live upon consecreted food that would never excite the sense-organs.' (Vedanta Desika Dinacharya)

In addition to his great intellectual qualities, Desika had the quality of humility. He practised the vow of non-possession though he was satisfied in the order of a Grihasta or house-holder. He was an ideal philosopher who was never tempted by the offer of royal patronage or earthly honours. He was extremely gentle and modest. He possessed all auspicious qualities that are to be found in an ideal preceptor. Sri Anna gives expression to this as follows :

दान्तिश्शान्तिश्शुचित्वं विषयविजयिता धीरता निस्पृहत्वं ।
शेषत्वं व श्रीशतद्दासजनविषयकं पारतन्त्र्यं च तत्र ॥
अक्षोभ्यत्वं पटुत्वं मृदुसमवशिता निर्भरत्वानुसूये ।
यस्मिन्नाजानसिद्धं स खलु विजयते वेंकटाचार्यवर्यः ॥

'Mastery over external sense-organs and internal sense-organs, purity, conquest over worldly objects, fortitude, non-desire, subservience to the Lord and the devotees of the Lord, the quality of being unassailed, smartness, modesty, equality, staunch faith, non-jealousy—Venkatanatha in whom these qualities are established by birth will prosper for ever !'

(Vedanta Desika Saptathi Ratnamalika)

Vedanta Desika was one of the greatest Acharyas of Visistadvaitism. He was one of the chief expositors of this school after Bhagavan Ramanuja and his contributors towards the stabilisation and consolidation of the thought of Ramanuja. His devotion to Sri Ramanuja was of a very high order and unique.

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Desika is the author of more than a hundred works and each one of them is equally great and important. They may be broadly classified into four categories :

1.	Philosophical works	... 53
2.	Literary works	... 5
3.	Devotional lyrics	... 28
4.	Poetic compositions in Tamil	... 19

The philosophical works are written both in Sanskrit and Tamil. 24 works are in Sanskrit and the rest are in Tamil. Desika has written some of these works in prose and some in poetry. Of these as many as *nine important works* are eminent commentaries on the works of Bhagavan Ramanuja and Yamuna and they richly contribute to the understanding of the thought of Ramanuja and Yamuna. The 'Tatparyachandrika' is a commentary on the 'Gita Bhashya' of Ramanuja, the 'Tattvateeka' is a comment on 'Sri Bhashya' of Ramanuja, and the 'Stotraratnabhashya' is a comment on the 'Stotraratna' of Yamuna. By writing out these commentaries Desika has enabled us to understand the expositions of the great Acharyas of the past. He has written a commentary of his own to the 'Isa Upanishad', and another his own on independent work 'Tatvamuktakalapa' These commentaries have strengthened the philosophical exposition of Bhagavan Ramanuja.

Desika has written as many as 13 independent works and has worked out the metaphysics, logic and epistemology of this school. The 'Nyayasiddhanjana', the 'Nyaya Parishuddhi' and 'Tattvamuktakalapa' belong to his category. 'Adhikarna Saravali' is a work in verse which summarises the discussions of the several sections of the Vedanta Sutras. This is an effective aid to the understanding of 'Sri Bhashya'. 'Shatadushini' is a critical examination of Advaita and 'Nikshepa Raksha' is a treatise in defence of Prapatti. Works like 'Sesvara Mimamsa', 'Mimamsapaduka', 'Pancharatna Raksha', and others are devoted to a correct understanding of the philosophy of 'Purvamimamsa', and of the importance of 'Pancharatna' Agama. By writing these independent treatises Desika has stabilised the school of Ramanuja. Desika has marvellously summarised the essence of each one of the stanzas of the thousand songs of Nammalvar in single words and has given an able analysis of the same in two of his poetical works 'Dravidopanishatsara' and 'Dravidopanishattatparya Ratnavali' and has contributed to the understanding of the philosophy of the 'Divyaprabandhams' of Nammalvar. The philosophical works of Desika in Tamil are mainly 29 in number, and in these works Desika has taught the philosophy of the Reality, the way and

the goal as centred round the Three Great Mantras of Sri Vaishnavism, the 'Mula Mantra', the 'Dvaya Mantra' and the 'Charama Sloka'. The 'Rahasyatrayasaram' is his *magnum opus* and this expounds the philosophy of Sadhana as Prapatti or utter self-surrender at the feet of the Lord.

The poetic compositions of Desika in Tamil are known as 'Desika Prabandhams' and compare with the compositions of the Alwars. The devotional lyrics are addressed to the Supreme Lord of the Universe, showing Himself out of compassion to His devotees in various holy places, and are the outpourings of his intense devotion to the Lord.

All these works of Desika, whether they are polemics or independent treatises or commentaries or literary compositions or Tamil Prabandhams or Philosophical works or devotional lyrics, have emanated from his God-intoxicated inspiration and bear testimony to his astounding scholarship, creative genius, art of dialectics, intense devotion and perfect mental peace.

Vedanta Desika has expressed his views very forcefully in all his works and has taught us the Philosophy of the Reality, the way and the goal which is traditionally styled as *Tattva*, *Hita* and *Purushartha*. In his 'Rahasyatrayasara', he discusses all the problems of philosophy in a lucid and thorough manner and teaches the theory and practice of the Principle of Prapatti or Sharanagathi. As in these philosophical works, Desika has taught even in his devotional lyrics, these supreme truths in a most appealing manner. It is enough even if these soul-stirring Stotras are understood properly.

A few selections from the several Stotras of Desika are given hereunder as representing the quintessence of his thought and message.

According to Desika, the goal of all knowledge is the realization of the fact that there is none equal or superior to the Supreme Lord in this universe.

न खलु तव सदृशाभ्यधिकाः नाथ त्वमेव सर्वलोकशरण्यः
एतावत् ज्ञानसारमिति ज्ञातुं त्रिदशनाथ इतरविचिन्ता ॥

(Achyuta Shatakam)

'Indeed there is none equal or superior to Thee. Thou art the saviour of all. Knowing all other things is only to learn that this is the quintessence of all knowledge.'

How are we to get the True Knowledge of Reality? Desika affirms that it is the compassion of the Lord that provides us an opportunity of getting true knowledge from the scriptures granted to us.

'God has endowed us with the scriptures out of sheer compassion for us, who are incapable of finding out our path. He has therefore, lighted this eternal lamp of the scriptures to brighten the path.'

(Dayashatakam, 18)

The act of creation and destruction of the universe is described by Desika as an act of mercy. At the time of creation, God endows us with bodies, sense-organs, the mind, and others out of sheer compassion as we were at the stage of Pralaya just like the non-sentiment entity. This association of the body is granted to us to enable us to evolve our upward evolution by following some spiritual discipline. This is the intention of creation. The intention of destruction or Pralaya is to save us from further involving ourselves in sin and degradation.

The duration of our life-time is very short and we cannot afford to play with it. Even when the body has become old our desires flourish unabated.

'With this body whose continuance is to be doubted even as we breathe out every time and which compares to the drop of water at the tip of a wet cloth, Thou knowest me, O Lord, and my weaknesses. Desire is yet in blooming youth though the body has attained old age.'

(Achyuta Shatakam)

'We are not aware of our duties, even of what little we are aware of, we are transgressing our duties.'

(Achyuta Shatakam)

We are born in this world on account of our past Karma and are exposed to sin and degradation on account of the freedom that is given to us by God. Unless we make a conscious effort to check the outgoing tendencies of the mind, there cannot be any remedy. This can actualise only on account of Divine grace, for which we have to pray to Him alone.

तरितुमच्युत दुरितमस्मिन् देहे एकदिवसेऽपि कृतम् ।
कालोऽलं न सकलः करुणायाः तव पूर्णपात्रमस्म्यहं ॥

'All time to come is not enough to exhaust by experience our sins committed even on a single day. So I am indeed, fully a worthy object for your mercy.'

(Achyuta Shatakam)

We do not know what we should do and what we should not do. It is only the Supreme Lord who knows what is really good to us.

कोऽहं किं करणीयं परिहरणीयमपि किमिति जानासि सर्वं ।
शक्नोषि च तद्धितं मम त्रिदशेश्वर कुरुष्व निजहृदयमिक्षितम् ॥

'Thou knowest what I am, what should be done by me and what should be avoided by me. Thou art capable of doing that good to me. So pray, do what is in your heart of hearts for me.'

(Achyuta Shatakam)

We should realise that wisdom lies in choosing the Supreme Lord alone for attaining all our aspirations. We should have faith in His saving grace.

त्वयि बहुमतिहीनः श्रीनिवासानुकम्पे ।
जगति गतिमिहान्यां देवि संमन्यते यः ॥
स खलु विबुधसिन्धौ सन्निकर्षं वहन्त्यां ।
शमयति मृगतृष्णावीचिकाभिः पिपासाम् ॥

'O, Compassion of Lord Srinivasa, a person who considers some one else as his saviour, having no faith in Thee, will be just like that foolish person who yearns to quench his thirst in the mirage, while the holy Ganga flows in floods nearby.'

(Dayashatakam)

It is the firm conviction of Desika that there is no way of salvation other than the infinite grace of the Supreme Lord. He is the goal and the endeavour. He is the means ever-existent and ever safe 'अव्याजसिद्धि अनपायमुपायमाहुः' He is a home of all perfections and is ever eager to save the souls from Samsara. He has given us freedom of action and waits for an aspiration to be saved, from our side 'रक्षपेक्षामपेक्षते' Rudolf Euckin's remarks, 'The freedem and self-activity of man are not a withdrawal of the Divine power and the lessening of Divine grace, but they are all verifications of these—the highest verification of all' are worth noting in this context.

'Bhakti' and 'Sharanagathi' are declared as the means of attaining spiritual realization. Sharanagathi is indispensable for either the origination or fulfilment of Bhakti. Desika has explained the implications of Sharanagathi as the immediate means of spiritual realization, in all its thoroughness in his 'Rahasyatraya Sara'.

Desika meditates upon the infinite virtues of the Lord and prays to Him to shower His grace. When we think of our deep sins we shudder with the fear of having no salvation at all. But when we think of the infinite mercy of the Lord, we feel comforted for He is sure to accept us, if we approach Him, with a sincere prayer for protection.

सन्तन्यमानमपराधगणं विचिन्त्य ।
त्रस्यामि हन्त भवतीं च विभावयामि ॥

'When I think of the incessant chain of sins of mine I shudder, but lo, when my thought settles upon Thy Divine Mercy I am comforted.'

(Dayashatakam)

Desika gives a hope even to an utterly helpless person that God would certainly pull him out of this miserable Samsara, only if he seeks Him for protection.

अतिकृपणोऽपि जन्तुरधिगम्य दये भवतीं ।
अशिथिलधर्मसेतुपदवीं रुचिरामचिरात् ॥
अमितमहोर्मिजालमतिलङ्घ्य भवाम्बुनिधिं ।
भवति वृषाचलेश पदपत्तननित्यधनी ॥

'O mercy of the Lord, on reaching Thee who are most agreeable and who are like the safe path of the bridge of eternal Dharma, a person, though utterly helpless, is sure to cross the ocean of Samsara surging with the chain of huge waves and to attain the eternal wealth of the city of Lord Srinivasa.'

(Dayashatakam)

Desika draws a point of comparison between us and the Supreme Lord and exhorts us to seek Him sincerely:

अहमस्म्यपराध चक्रवर्ती ।
करुणे त्वं च गुणेषु सार्वभौमी ॥

'I am a monarch of all sins whereas O mercy of the Lord, Thou art a sovereign of all auspicious qualities.'

(Dayashatakam)

If God had only supremacy or Paratana there would have been no hope at all for us. But fortunately for us, He has the quality of accessibility or Saulabhya. It is this quality of the Lord that ensures us a hope of salvation. Desika points out this as follows:

'अनन्याधीनः सन् भवति परतन्त्रः प्रणमतां ।
कृपे सर्वज्ञा न गणयति तेषामपकृतिम् ॥

'Though by Thy essential nature, Thou art not subordinate to anyone, Thou obeyest those that surrender unto Thee. O mercy, Thou art verily omniscient, but yet Thou countest not the sins of the surrendered.'

(Dayashatakam)

'God uses His ingenuity and cleverness in seeking us out and claiming us to His side and we are as though chased by the Hound of Heaven.'

(Dayashatakam)

There is none other than the Supreme Lord whom we have to approach for getting rid of this fear of Samsara.

अभीतिहेतोरनुवर्तनीयम् ।
नाथ त्वदन्यं न विभावयामि ॥
भयं कुतः स्यात् त्वयि सानुकम्पे ।
रक्षा कुतः स्यात् त्वयि जातशेषे ॥

'For attaining fearlessness, I find none other than Thee, O Lord, to be followed faithfully. If Thou art compassionate, from whom at all can there be fear? If Thou art angry from whom can there be protection?'

(Ashtabhuja Shatakam)

When once we have thrown the burden of our protection on His feet, we feel relieved and will not worry any more about the rest of our life. The power that has led us till now is sure to lead us to the end.

अज्ञातनिर्गममनागमवेदिनं मां ।
अन्धं न किञ्चिदवलम्बनमश्नुवानम् ॥
एतावतीं गमयितुः पदवीं दयालोः ।
शेषाध्वलेशनयने क इवातिभारः ॥

'For that ever merciful Lord that enabled even me, who was unaware of the path, who was not a knower of the scriptures, who was blind, who had not even a single support whatsoever, cover this length of distance, is it a heavy burden to lead through the rest of the path?'

(Varadaraja Panchasat)

Though we are aware of our defects and the auspicious nature of the Lord we do not act properly. We recede from Him and never proceed towards Him on account of the impelling forces of the senses and reminiscent impressions. So Desika prays to the Lord to chase us out and to capture us to His side.

दृष्टेपि दुर्बलधियं दमनेऽपि दृप्तम् ।
स्नात्वापि धूलिरसिकं भजनेऽपि भीमम् ॥
बध्वा गृहाण वृषशैलपतेर्दये मां ।
त्वद्वारणे स्वयमनुग्रहशृङ्खलाभिः ॥

'O mercy of Lord Srinivasa, pray, Bind Thou with chains of good-will and drag towards Thee this elephant of Thine which is feeble-minded though sees the truth, which is infatuated though severely punished, which is fond of throwing dust in itself even after a bath, and which is yet fearful though it is appeased.'

(Dayashatakam)

Desika compares God to a clever hunter who spreads his strong nets to catch the running animals in the forest. God is requested to spread his long nets of auspicious qualities and to capture the souls trying to run away from Him.

'विक्षेपमर्हसि दये विपलायितेऽपि ।
व्याजं विमाय्य वृषशैलपतेः विहारम् ॥
स्वाधीनसत्वसरणिः स्वयमत्र अन्तौ ।
द्राघीयसी दृढतरा गुणवागुरा त्वम् ॥'

'O Goddess of mercy, Thou art the strong and long net of virtues and have the movement of the animals under your control. So, finding an occasion of the sport of the Lord, cast Thy nets on this person even if he tries to run away and do capture him.'

(Dayashatakam)

Desika prescribes in his 'Nyasadasaka' the mode of surrendering oneself at the feet of the Lord.

अहं मद्रक्षणभरो मद्रक्षणफलं तथा ।
न मम श्रीपतेरेवेत्यात्मानं निक्षिपेत् बुधः
न्यस्याम्यकिञ्चिनः श्रीमन् , अनुकूलोऽन्यवर्जितः ।
विश्वासप्रार्थनापूर्वं आत्मरक्षाभरं त्वयि ॥
स्वामी स्वशेषं स्ववशं, स्वभरत्वेन निर्भरम् ।
स्वदत्तस्वधिया स्वार्थं, स्वस्मिन् नश्यति मां स्वयम् ॥
श्रीमन् अमीष्टवरद, त्वामस्मि शरणं गतः ।
एतत् देहावसाने मां, त्वत्पादं प्रापय स्वयम् ॥
त्वच्छेषत्वे स्थिरधियं, त्वत्प्राप्त्यैकप्रयोजनम् ।
निषिद्धक्रियरहितं, कुरु मां नित्यकिङ्करम् ॥
देवीभूमिसहेत्यादि जुष्टस्व भगवन् तव ।
नित्यं निरपराधेषु, कैङ्कर्येषु नियुङ्क्ष्व माम् ॥
मां मदीयं च निखिलं चेतनाचेतनात्मकं ।
स्वकैङ्कर्योपकरणं वरद स्वीकुरु स्वयम् ॥
त्वमेव रक्षस्व मम, त्वमेव करुणाकर ।
न प्रवर्तय पापानि प्रवृत्तानि निवर्तय ॥
अकृत्यानां च करणं कृत्यानां करणं च मे ।
क्षमस्व निखिलं देव प्रणतार्तिहर प्रभो ॥
श्रीमन्नियतस्वाङ्गं मद्रक्षणभरार्पणम् ।
अर्थयेऽहं स्वयं स्वामिन् , नतोऽस्मिह निर्भरः ॥

'I, the burden of my protection and the fruit thereof do not belong to me. They belong to the Supreme Lord of Sri. With this reflection a wise man should surrender himself to the Lord.'

'O Lord of Sri, being bereft of any other agreeable means, being the possessor of nothing, I am surrendering unto Thee, the burden of my protection with a fervent prayer and with faith in your saving grace.'

'The Lord Himself makes me who is subservient to Him, who is under his own control, who is care-free on account of the responsibility of protection being His, surrender unto Him, for his own sake by His own will granted to me.'

'O Lord of Sri, granter of all desires, I have sought refuge at Thy feet. Lead me by Thyself to Thy feet at the end of this life of mine.'

'O Lord, make me, who has the firm knowledge of his subservience unto Thee, who has Thy attainment alone as his supreme object of life, and who is free from the performance of prohibited and interested actions, Thy eternal servant.'

'O Lord, Mayest thou employ me in non-sinful and eternal service unto Thee that art eternally associated with Goddess Sri, the Divine ornaments and the Divine weapons.'

'O granter of boons, do accept of thine own accord, me and all that is mine, both sentient and non-sentient as a means of Thy service.'

'O merciful Lord, Thou alone shouldst save me. Pray, do not prompt me to sin. Also avert me from sins already begun.'

'Thou art the cause of all worthy deeds and Thou art the instrument of even unworthy deeds. O Lord, the destroyer of the fear of the surrendered, pray, pardon all my deeds.'

'The Lord of Sri, of his own accord, has actualised the surrender of the burden of my protection, comprising of the fine accessories, unto Himself, and so am I free from burdens.'

(Nyayadasaka)

In these ten couplets Desika has marvellously expounded the method of seeking protection with the Lord. The reflection of these thoughts is sure to energise the aspirant with the firm conviction that God alone is the goal and the endeavour of humanity. It is ordained that every one should dedicate oneself to the service of the Lord day in and day out in the above manner.

Desika describes that a Prapanna who has surrendered himself unto the Lord is a 'Shanta', 'Danta', 'Uparata', and 'Thithikshu'. He will be a well-wisher of all. He will be beneficent to one and all.

सर्वेष्वपि निर्वैराः शरणागतसत्य गृहीतशाश्वतधर्माः ।
गतसङ्गाः तवभक्ताः, यान्ति त्वामेव दुर्लभमितरैः ॥

'O Lord, who art true to Thy devotees are free from enmity towards all. They will be following the eternal Dharma.

Being detached in worldly interests they will attain Thee alone who art inaccessible to others.'

(Achyuta Shatakam)

The main teaching of Desika is to develop an intense spiritual life dedicated to the service of the Supreme. Life here is a prelude to a life hereafter and so this is to be purified and led properly. We must so shape this life of ours as it becomes conducive to the attainment of our supreme object of life.

रागाद्यपेतं हृदयं, वागदुष्टानृतादिना ।
हिंसादिरहितः कायः केशवाराधनं त्रयम् ॥

(Rahasyatrayasara)

'The mind divested of desire and others, speech free from falsehood and others, body free from causing injury to others—these three are modes of worshipping the Lord.'

Desika says that we can pray of God only two things. All other prayers are sure to cause disaster.

तत्पादभक्तिज्ञानाभ्यां, फलमन्यत्कदाचन ।
न याचेत् पुरुषो विष्णुं, याचनात् नश्यति ध्रुवम् ॥

'One should never beg of the Lord for any favour other than devotion in His feet and knowledge relating to Him. If he does so, he will certainly get destroyed.'

(Rahasyatrayasara)

In this world how can we get supreme happiness? Desika says that we can get happiness by achieving three things.

उपयुक्तेषु वैशद्यं त्रिवर्गनिरपेक्षता ।
करणत्रयसारूप्यं, इति सौख्यरसायनम् ॥

'Proficiency in what is useful to us, non-desire in the three Purusharthas, unity in the three, namely, mind, speech and action. These three are the causes of happiness.'

(Rahasyatrayasara)

In his 'Tattva Sandesha', Desika gives his word of advice as follows:

सत्वस्थान् निभृतं प्रसादय, सतां वृत्तिं व्यवस्थापय ।
त्रस्य ब्रह्मविदागसः, तृणमिव त्रैवर्गिकान् भावय ॥
नित्ये क्षेषिणि निक्षिपन् निजभरं सर्वं सहे श्रीसखे ।
धर्मे धारय चातकस्य कुशलिन् धाराधरैकान्तिनः ॥

'O wise man, please profusely the Satvikas; follow strictly the conduct of the virtuous; shudder to sin against the knowers of Brahman; consider the objects of the three Purusharthas as worthless as straw; once having placed the burden of your protection on the eternal Sheshin, The Lord of Sri, and the all-forgiver, follow the vow of the Chataka bird that exclusively waits for the showers from the cloud.'

(Tattva Sandesha)

Desika has condensed his teaching to humanity in this stanza and this applies to all irrespective of time, caste, creed or colour.

It is the desire of Desika that man should live a devout and pious life dedicated to the service of God and the Godly ones. In his 'Rahasyatrayasara',he gives practical suggestions to one and all to develop such a devoted life. The mode of life preached here is the ideal that is expounded by the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Smrithis. Desika has given a reorientation to the same and has taught it by practising it himself. According to him, the characteristic feature of a scholar is that he conquers the dualities of life and leads a calm, peaceful and pious life beneficent to himself as well as others.

न प्रहृष्यति संमाने नावमानेनुतप्यते ।
गङ्गाह्रद इवाक्षोभ्यो यः स पण्डित उच्यते ॥

'He does not rejoice in honours; nor does he repent when he is dishonoured. He who is thus unassailable like the deep waters of the Ganga is a real Pandit.'

This advice of Desika is useful to all and for all times. All his works convey this message of leading a noble, virtuous and pious life resulting in supreme satisfaction and happiness. The greatness of Desika lies in the fact that he realised the Supreme in his life and that he showed that path of light to others.

Vedanta Desika was a great spiritual teacher and he has pointed out the road to spiritual perfection. We must pray to God to grant us the energy to travel over such a road to the supreme goal of our life.